

# FACT SHEET ON WOMEN IN ONTARIO

# FLASH

## Labour force issues

**W**omen today can expect to spend 37 years in the paid labour force. Women with and without children, married or not, are working for pay. The diversity of women is reflected in the female labour force, but is not yet reflected in the jobs and opportunities available to them. By the year 2000 women will make up half of the total labour force, but women are still mainly employed in a small number of lower-paid occupations, and make up the majority of part-time workers.

To provide an overview of women in the labour force, two areas will be examined: women's role in the labour force and the characteristics of women's work.

The glossary at the end gives definitions of the technical terms used.

## Women's role in the labour force

The "labour force" always refers to the population 15 years of age and older who are working (employed) or who are looking for work (unemployed). When looking at women's role in the labour force it is useful to consider the informa-

tion from two different angles: the characteristics of women who make up the female labour force, and the factors which affect the number of women who participate in the labour force.

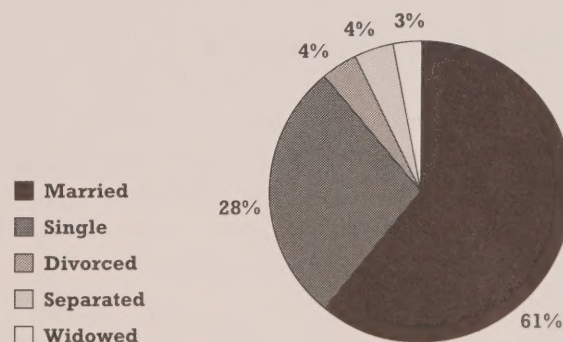
The first section below examines the composition of the female labour force, showing the distribution of all the women in the labour force by factors such as age or marital status. These figures refer only to women in the labour force.

## Composition of the female labour force of Ontario: a profile

### Marital Status

In 1986,<sup>1</sup> married women made up the largest portion of the female labour force: 60.7%. This percentage has been virtually the same over the last 20 years.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 1**  
**Ontario female labour force composition by marital status, 1986**



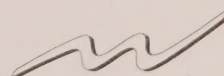
Source: OWD database, Census 1986.



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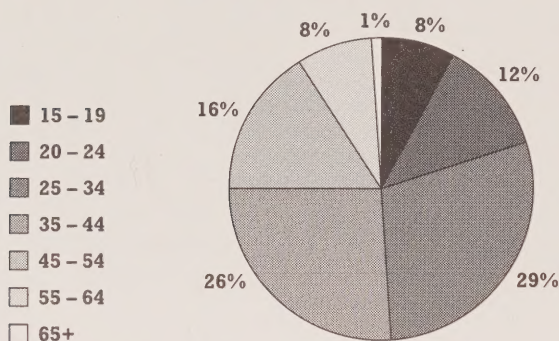
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## Age

Most women workers (55.1%) are in the 25 to 44 age group, which includes the prime child-bearing ages for women.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 2**  
**Ontario female labour force**  
**composition by age, February 1990**



Source: *The Labour Force*, February 1990.

## Full-time & part-time

Of all women employed in Ontario in 1990, 75% were full-time workers and 25% were part-time workers. In the 25 to 44 age group, 82% of women workers were full-time workers.<sup>4</sup> As is true for men, part-time work is much more common among younger and older women than among women likely to have young children at home.

## Designated groups

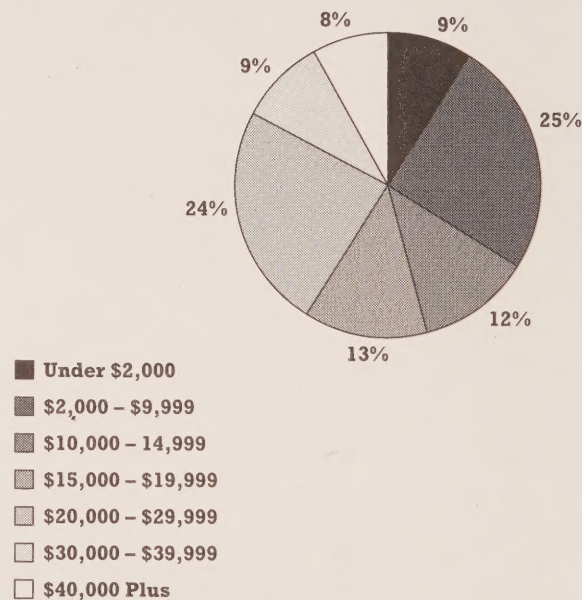
Of all the working women in Ontario in 1986, 9.2% were racial minorities, 1.6% were aboriginal, 3.2% were women with disabilities and 5% were Francophones.<sup>5</sup> Of course, some women fit into more than one of these groups.

## Earnings

Men working full-time, full-year in Ontario 1989, earned an average of \$37,417, while women earned an average of \$25,205. The wage gap between men and women means that a woman earns on average only 67 cents for every dollar a man earns.<sup>6</sup>

The following section examines the participation rates of women in the labour force. These figures show the number (or proportion) of women who are part of the labour force related to factors such as education or region, and are based on the total number of women over age 15.

**Figure 3**  
**Ontario female labour force**  
**composition by earnings, 1989**



Source: *Earnings of Men and Women 1989*, Statistics Canada.

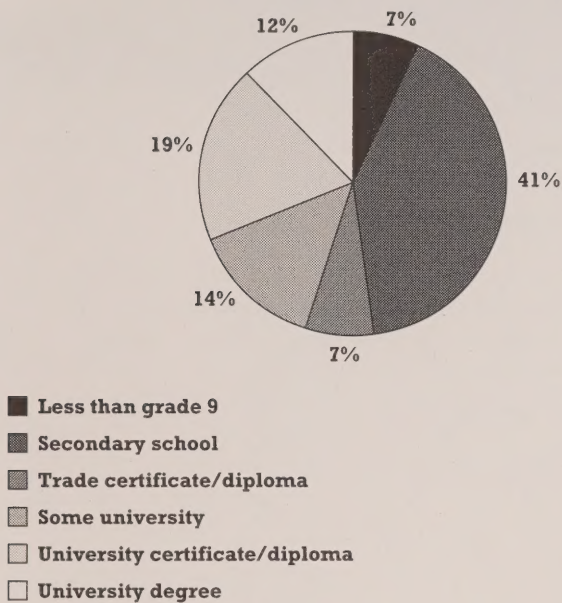
For more information on earnings, see *Infoflash #1, Basic Facts*.

## Education

In 1986, 41.3% of the female labour force had some secondary school education or a secondary school diploma, and 51% had some post-secondary education including degrees, diplomas and certificates.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 4

### Ontario female labour force composition by education, 1986



Source: OWD database, Census 1986.

## Women's participation in the labour force

### Rate increase

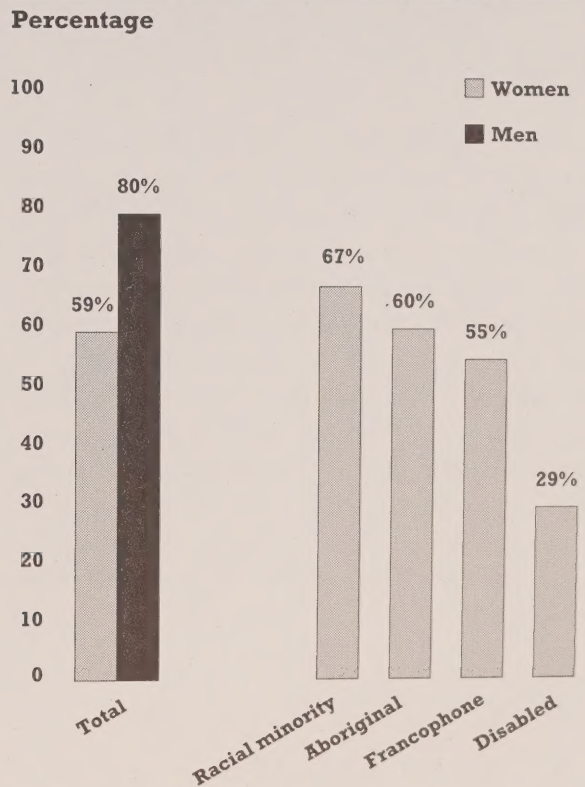
The rate at which women participate in the labour force has been increasing steadily for the past 20 years. For example, in 1975, only 48.6% of women over the age of 15 were in the Ontario labour force.<sup>8</sup> In 1991, 60.5% of all women over 15 were in the labour force.<sup>9</sup>

## Designated groups distribution

The 1986 census figures show that 59.3% of all women were in the labour force. In the same year the proportion of aboriginal and racial minority women in the labour force was even higher, at 59.8% and 67.0% of their total numbers respectively. Women with disabilities had a significantly lower rate of participation at 29.4%. Francophone women were slightly below the average with a 54.6% participation rate.<sup>10</sup>

Figure 5

### Labour force participation rates, Ontario, 1986, by designated groups



Source: Statistics Canada, Census 1986, Special tabulation.



## Employment pattern

Increasingly, women and men have the same employment pattern. Younger women, including women with young children, have very high participation rates. In 1990, 81.1% of all women between the ages of 25 and 44 were in the work force. The 1986 Census showed that 60.7% of married women with at least one child under six were in the labour force.<sup>11</sup> Only when families reach three or more children do women tend to participate less in the workforce and even then, only slightly less.<sup>12</sup>

Single fathers have an 80.7% participation rate while single mothers' participation rate is 63.5%.

## Career length

The high participation rate among mothers of young children suggests that younger women now working will tend to have as long a working career as men. Indeed, trends are showing a slow decline in the length of a man's working life, and a rapid increase in that of women. A recent study estimates that young women will spend about 37 years in the workforce, 34 if they are married.<sup>13</sup> In 1976 it was predicted that women entering the workforce then would spend only 25 years working for pay.<sup>14</sup> The same sources predicted a working life of 42 years for men entering in 1988; 45 years in the 1976 prediction.

## Marital status

Marital status is related to the participation of women in the workforce.<sup>15</sup> Husbands are the only earners in fewer than one-quarter of all families with children at home. The number of single female parents in the workforce reaches 63.5%, a higher rate than average for all women but significantly less than the rate for single male parents of 80.7%.<sup>16</sup>

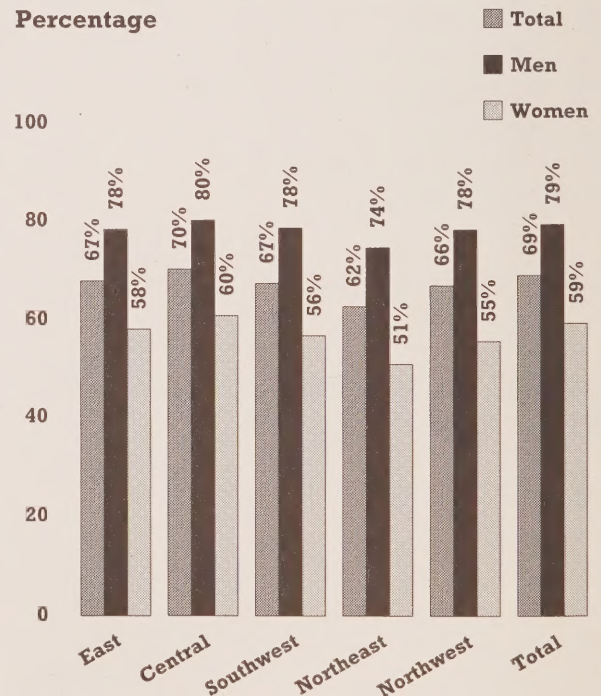
## Husband's income

Contrary to popular belief, the husband's income has little effect on whether women work, even in families with young children. Figures for all of Canada in 1988 show that among two-parent families with children under six, 71.5% of women are in the labour force on average. This figure varies little whether the husband's salary is less than \$6,000 or more than \$40,000.

## Regional distribution

Women show different rates of labour force participation depending on where they live in the province, ranging from a low of 51% in north-eastern Ontario to a high of 60.9% in central Ontario.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 6**  
**Labour force participation rates,**  
**Ontario, 1986, by regional variation**

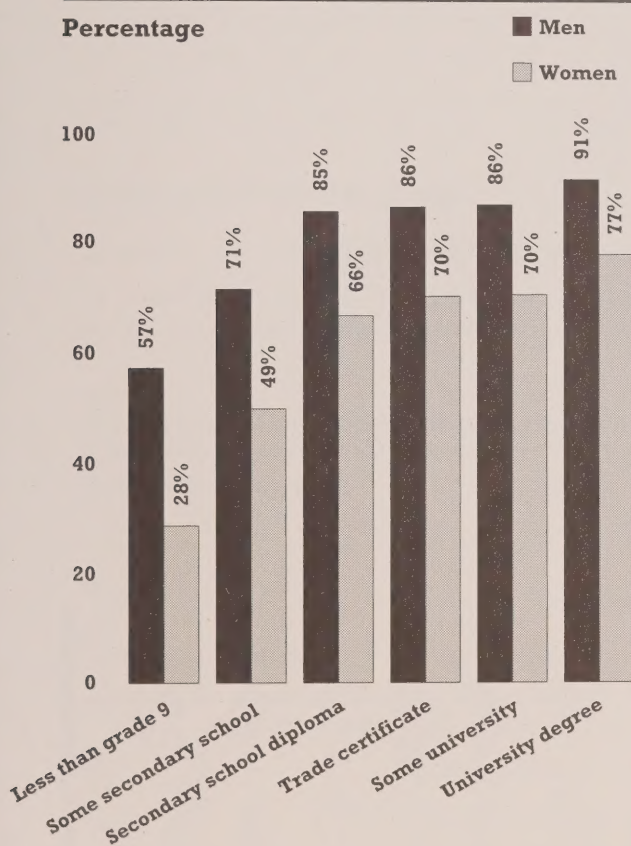


Source: OWD database, Census 1986.

## Education

Education also has an impact on women's labour force participation. Women, like men, have higher rates of participation when they have more education.<sup>18</sup> Women with less than grade 9 have a 28.6% participation rate. That rate reaches 77% for women with a university degree. At all levels of education men have higher rates of labour force participation but this difference declines as the level of education rises.

**Figure 7**  
**Labour force participation rates,**  
**Ontario, 1986, by sex and education**



Source: OWD database, Census 1986.

## Characteristics of women's work

Although women and men make up nearly equal proportions of the labour force, they are not evenly distributed among the more than 500 different occupations classified by the Census. Women tend to work in relatively few occupations, and those occupations where women predominate tend to be lower paid than those in which men predominate.

## Union participation

Belonging to a union can help women secure higher wages, more benefits and increased job protection. Figures from 1987 show that about 28% of the Ontario labour force belong to a union. However, women make up just over one-third (35%) of all union members in Ontario. Only 22% of the female labour force, as compared with 32% of the male labour force, were union members in 1987.<sup>19</sup>

## Types of jobs

One out of every five women working in Ontario in 1986 was working as a secretary, sales clerk or bookkeeper. Forty-one percent of Ontario's working women work in just ten occupations: secretary, sales clerk, bookkeeper, cashier, nurse, food and beverage server, elementary and kindergarten teacher, office clerk, electronic data processing operator, and receptionist. By contrast, only 21% of men work in the ten most common occupations for men. So women are concentrated in half as many occupations as men are.



## Distribution in industries

Table 1  
**Ontario labour force distribution  
by industry, 1986**

	Women	Men
Service	50%	28%
Wholesale, retail, trade	18%	16%
Manufacturing and construction	16%	36%
Finance, insurance, real estate	8%	4%
Transportation and communication	4%	9%
Primary extraction industries	3%	5%
Other Industries	2%	1%
	100%	100%

Source: OWD database, Census 1986.

The proportion of women and men in different industries is unbalanced. Over 80% of all women working in Ontario in 1989 were concentrated in the service sector, which includes services and public administration, trade, finance and transportation and communications.<sup>20</sup> However, men are more evenly distributed throughout industries, with only 58% in the service sector.<sup>21</sup>

## Proportion of employees

Although women make up nearly half the workforce, they rarely make up the same proportion of employees in any occupation.<sup>22</sup> Even where the proportion of men and women is more equal, women tend to be found in lower-paid jobs within the occupational category. In the management, administration and clerical groups of occupations, for example, women predominate in the clerical jobs, making up 78% of that occupation, while men predominate in the management and administration jobs at 67.1%. (see Figure 8 on page 7)

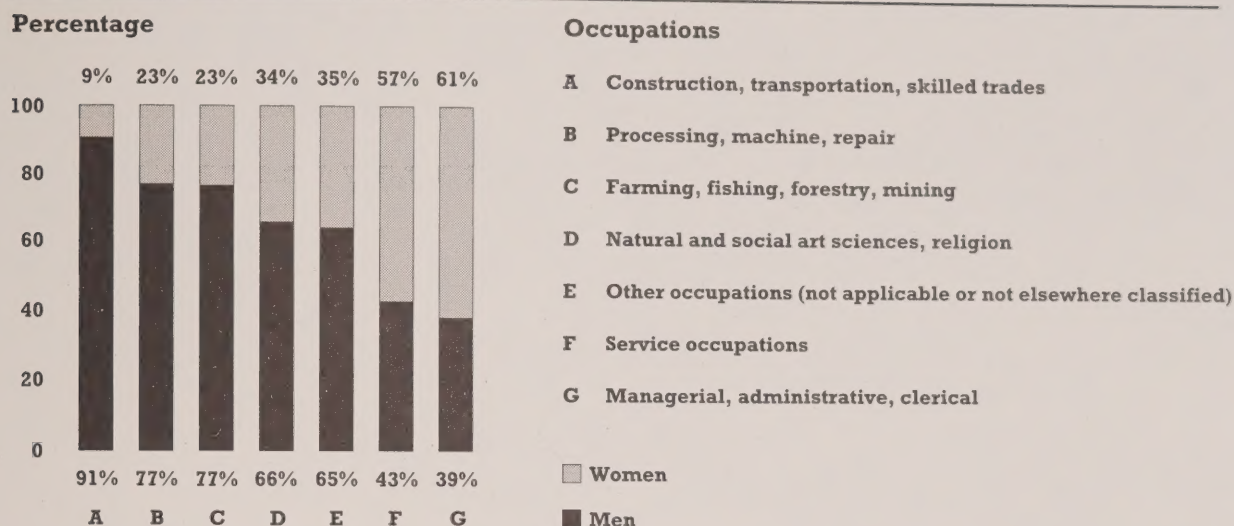
*Women in Ontario*, a 14 minute video, brings to life many of the statistics presented in the INFOFLASH series. It is available from:

TV Ontario, VIPS,  
Box 200, Station Q,  
Toronto, M4T 2T1,  
(416) 484-2637 (loans)/2610 (purchases).

Or from:

LM Media Marketing Services Ltd.,  
115 Torbay Road, Unit 9,  
Markham, L3R 2M9,  
(416) 475-3750.

**Figure 8**  
**Occupation proportion of men and women, Ontario, 1986**

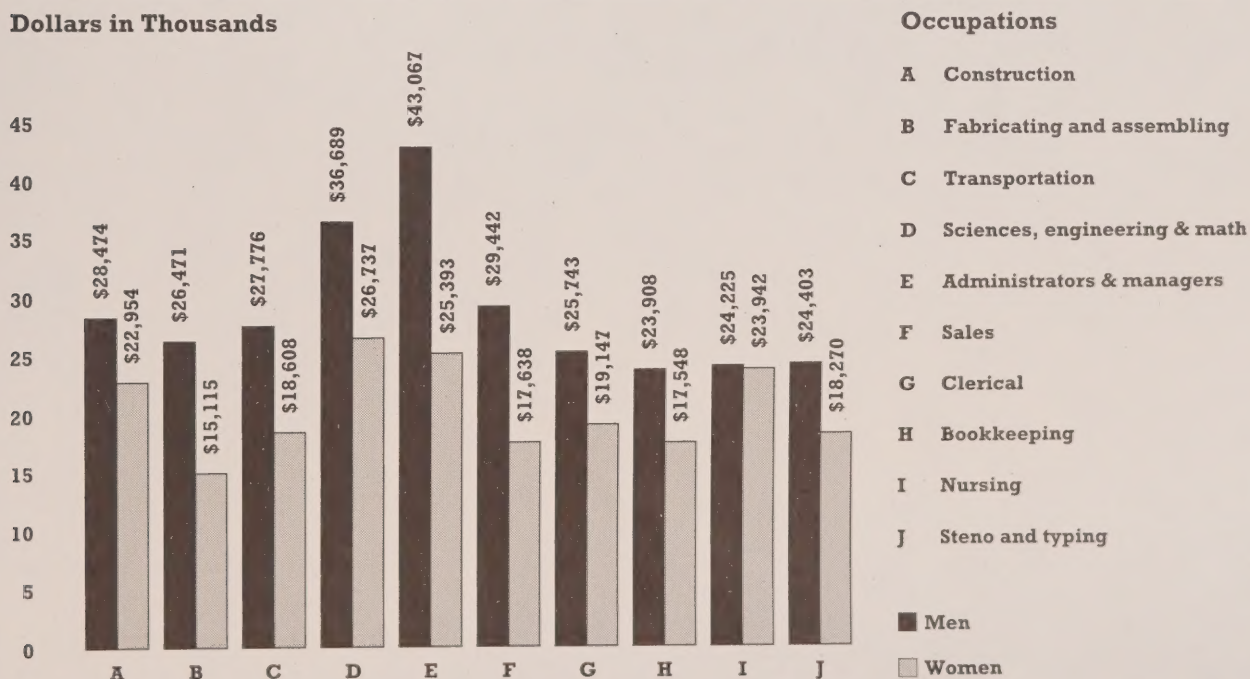


Source: OWD database, Census 1986.

## Comparative pay

Generally, the greater the percentage of women in an occupation, the lower it is paid.<sup>23</sup> And, within an occupational category, men tend to have substantially higher earnings than women.

**Figure 9**  
**Proportion of earnings for women in the five largest male and female occupations**



Source: Statistics Canada, Census 1986.



## Glossary

### Work

An activity that is done in exchange for pay, or with the intention of making a profit. It includes "unpaid family work" which is defined as work without pay in a farm or business for a related household member. Unpaid household work is not included.

### Labour force

The employed and the unemployed together make up the labour force.

### Unemployment rate

The unemployment rate shows the unemployed as a percentage of the labour force. All the unemployment rates quoted in this *INFOFLASH* are seasonally adjusted, which means that the rate has been adjusted to balance seasonal highs and lows.

### Participation rate

The participation rate shows the labour force as a percentage of the population 15 years of age and older.

### Full-year, full-time

The term "full-year, full-time worker" describes people who worked full time for 49 to 52 weeks in the given year.

### Industry

Industry describes the economic sector of the employer – manufacturing, retail trade and so on. These descriptions are assigned a code from the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC), which contains over 300 basic categories, and higher "roll-ups" – major groups and divisions, for example.

### Occupation

Occupation describes work by most important duties. These descriptions are assigned one of over 500 codes from the 1980 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system.

\*All definitions come from Statistics Canada, Census 1986.

## Endnotes

1. OWD database, Census 1986.
2. *Ontario Statistics 1986*, table 8.6.
3. *The Labour Force*, February 1990.
4. *The Labour Force*, February 1990.
5. Ethnocultural Database. Special tabulations from the 1986 Census.
6. *Earnings of Men and Women 1989*, Statistics Canada.
7. OWD database, Census 1986.
8. Ontario Statistics 1986.
9. *The Labour Force*, January 1991.
10. Statistics Canada, Census 1986, Special tabulation.
11. Statistics Canada, Census 1986.
12. OWD database, Census 1986.
13. Pam Smith, "Working Life and Unemployment Tables for Males and Females," Discussion paper 55, University of Alberta, 1988.
14. Ontario Ministry of Education, *Changing Roles in a Changing World*, Toronto 1976.
15. OWD database, Census 1986.
16. Statistics Canada, Census 1986.
17. OWD database, Census 1986.
18. OWD database, Census 1986.
19. *Corporations and Labour Unions Annual Return 1987*, Statistics Canada 1989.
20. OWD database, Census 1986.
21. OWD database, Census 1986.
22. OWD database, Census 1986.
23. Statistics Canada, Census 1986.

INFOFLASH is a series of newsletters which focus on different aspects of women's lives in Ontario. Issues #1 and #2 deal with *Basic Facts* and *Labour Force Issues*. Subsequent issues are planned to examine income, education, work and family, and other subjects.